

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY OSLO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1016

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 0339

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, NO, SZ, UR

SUBJ: NORWEGIAN AND NORDIC TRADE UNION CONTACTS WITH SOVIETS

REFS: OSLO A-6, OSLO 0304

1. DURING DISCUSSIONS WITH AMBASSADOR, DCM AND LABATT

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JAN 16, NORWEGIAN TRADE UNION FEDERATION (LO) PRESIDENT

TOR ASPENGREN AND INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY KAARE SANDEGREN PUT LO'S CONTACTS WITH AND FUTURE VISITS FROM SOVIETS (REFAIR) INTO BETTER PERSPECTIVE. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED IF A RECENT NEWSPAPER ACCOUNT OF LO INITIATIVE TO DISASSOCIATE ITSELF FROM MORE EXTREME CRITICISM OF SOVIETS, AND TO RESUME CONTACTS WITH SOVIETS, MEANT LO HAD BEEN KNOCKING AT SOVIET EMBASSY DOOR TO APOLOGIZE OVER NOBEL PEACE PRIZE AWARD TO SAKHAROV. ASPENGREN SAID CERTAINLY NOT. LO HAD NOT AND WOULD NOT OPPOSE OR APOLOGIZE FOR SAKHAROV'S PEACE PRIZE AWARD. LO HAD MADE THIS CLEAR TO SOVIETS AND TOLD THEM MANY TIMES THT NORWAY IS A FREE COUNTRY, WITH FREEDOM OF SPEECH, AND THAT SOVIETS WILL HAVE TO ACCEPT THIS IF THEY WANT TO DEAL WITH NORWEGIANS.

2. AS FOR MEETING WITH NEW SOVIET AMBASSADOR, ASPENGREN CALLED HIM YOUNG AND OBVIOUSLY INEXPERIENCED AND COMPARED HIM UNFAVORABLY WITH PREVIOUS SOVIET AMBASSADOR ROMANOVSKY. NORWEGIANS OFTEN HARRASS SOVIET HALF SERIOUSLY AND HALF JOKINGLY AND ROMANOVSKY KNEW HOW TO TAKE IT AND RESPOND. NEW AMBASSADOR TOOK EVERYTHING SERIOUSLY. ASPENGREN DID NOT THINK LO WOULD SEE MUCH OF HIM.

3. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED ASPENGREN ABOUT THE FUTURE HIGH LEVEL SOVIET DELEGATION VISIT TO THE NORDIC COUNTRIES ALSO MENTIONED IN THE NEWSPAPER ARTICLE. ASPENGREN SAID THE SOVIETS ANNOUNCED IN DECEMBER THAT THEY WOULD ACCEPT AN OUTSTANDING NORDIC TRADE UNION FEDERATION (NTUC) INVITATION FOR A RETURN VISIT. BY WAY OF BACKGROUND, ASPENGREN EXPLAINED THAT SWEDISH LO PRESIDENT GUNNAR NILSEN EXTENDED THE INVITATION LONG AGO, BUT SOVIET ACCEPTANCE GREW OUT OF A RECENT MEETING WITH MOSHAIEV, THE SOVIET TRADE UNION OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS. MOSHAIEV MET WITH THE NORDIC LO PRESIDENTS IN STOCKHOLM IN DECEMBER, IN BELATED RESPONSE TO NORDIC, PRINCIPALLY NORWEGIAN, DEMANDS THAT SOVIETS CEASE INTERVENING IN PORTUGAL. IT WAS SOON EVIDENT THAT MOSHAIEV HAD NO AUTHORITY TO SAY ANYTHING, SO NILSEN ASKED "DEVILISHLY" IF SHELEPIN COULD NOT

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COME TALK WITH THEM. MOSHAIEV REPLIED THAT ONE THING HE COULD SAY WAS THAT SHELEPIN WOULD NOT. THE SOVIET TRADE UNIONS DID, HOWEVER, RESURRECT AND ACCEPT NILSEN'S OUTSTANDING INVITATION FOR A HIGH LEVEL DELEGATION VISIT. THEY HOPED TO MAKE THE VISIT IN JANUARY OR FEBRUARY, BUT THIS WAS NOT CONVENIENT, AND IT IS NOT CLEAR WHEN THE VISIT WILL OCCUR.

4. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED ABOUT THE LIKELIHOOD AND TIMING OF ANOTHER EAST-WEST TRADE UNION CONFERENCE. ASPENGREN SAID THE NORDICS (NTUC) HAD PROPOSED THAT TH PRACTICAL RESULTS SINCE THE LAST CONFERENCE SHOULD BE ANALYZED TO SEE IF A NEW CONFERENCE SHOULD BE HELD. SPECIFICALLY, THE LAST CONFERENCE AGREED THAT EACH NATIONAL TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION SHOULD REPORT ON THE WORK ENVIRONMENT SITUATION IN ITS COUNTRY AND EFFORTS TO IMPROVE IT. NTUC FEELS THAT ANALYSIS OF THESE REPORTS WILL SHOW WHETHER THEREIS ABASIS FOR PRACTICAL COOPERATION TO IMPROVE THE WORK ENVIRONMENT, AND THEREFORE FOR A NEW CONFERENCE. FEW SUCH REPORTS HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED THUS FAR, ASPENGREN COMMENTED. THE FOUR EUROPEAN ILO WORKER REPRESENTATIVES, CHARGED WITH ORGANIZING THE CONFERENCES, HAVE NOT YET RESPONDED TO THE NORDIC PROPOSAL. LO HAS NOW LEARNED THAT EAST EUROPEANS RECENTLY PROPOSED HOLDING A NEW CONFERENCE IN NOVEMBER 1976. ASPENGREN AND SANDEGREN WERE HIGHLY SKEPTICAL THAT AN EAST-WEST TRADE UNION CONFERENCE SHOULD OR WOULD BE HELD IN NOVEMBER 1976.

5. A LOWER, TECHNICAL-LEVEL SOVIET DELEGATION COMES IN FEBRUARY TO OBSERVE WORK ENVIRONMENT IN NORWAY, BUT ASPENGREN AND SANDEGREN CONSIDER THIS ROUTINE AND WITHOUT POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE.
BYRNE

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